

A printed sheet of four pages (forwarded to us by post) gives a list of the birds observed round Quebec, by J. Le Moine, Esq., drawn up "after the system of the Smithsonian Institution."

XXII.—*Letters, Extracts from Correspondence, Notices, &c.*

WE have received the following letters:—

To the Editor of 'The Ibis.'

26 Pembroke Gardens, Bayswater,
1st February, 1861.

SIR,—During a stay in Egypt in the latter part of 1857, I shot near Kafr Dowar, a village on the Mahmoudieh Canal near Alexandria, a specimen of *Budytes cinereocapillus*. This was the only one that came under my notice. Heuglin, who is, I believe, the latest authority, does not include this species in his 'Syst. Ueb. d. Vög. N. O. Afrika's,' so I send you the above notice of its occurrence for publication in 'The Ibis,' if you think it of sufficient interest. M. Loche gives it as an inhabitant of Algiers (Cat. Mamm. et Ois. de l'Algérie, p. 80), while *B. rayi* is the only species found in Western Africa (Hartlaub, System d. Orn. W. Afrika's, p. 72). I may add that I was fortunate enough to obtain a *Chettusia leucura*, which I saw exposed for sale in the market at Alexandria. It had been shot in the vicinity by an Arab gunner, but does not generally occur below the Cataracts.

Yours, &c.,

JOHN CAVAFY.

To the Editor of 'The Ibis.'

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Fordingbridge, February 12th, 1861.

SIR,—In your periodical for October last, I ventured to direct attention to the non-existence of a reliable list of British birds, and to express a hope that this want might soon be supplied by some of your able contributors.

On referring to your interesting review of Herr Bädcker's and Dr. Brewer's oological works in 'The Ibis' for October 1859, I have more than ever felt the difficulty under which I labour from not knowing what birds really *ought* to be considered *British*.

I am quite prepared to accept your list of thirty-five British desiderata as perfectly authentic, although Mr. Hewitson figured

three of them (Snowy Owl, Great White Heron, and Bewick's Swan) in his *second* work, and, so far as my memory serves me, omitted only one (the Great White Heron) in his third work; but as I have only the *second* work within reach at present, I may be mistaken in this.

Now although I believe there are thirty-five deficiencies in British oology, I am still at a loss to discover how many known species ought to be considered British, and I should feel deeply indebted to yourself, or any other member of the British Ornithologists' Union, who would kindly inform me how I can obtain a reliable list of British birds, and still more indebted to any one who would publish such a list in the way suggested in my last letter.

In common with many others who feel a real interest in the study of ornithology, I am too much engaged in professional avocations to admit of my devoting much time to the pursuit, and am obliged to confine my attention pretty much to British birds; consequently I am desirous that my knowledge of these should be as exact as possible, and this, without an authentic list, is difficult to attain.

Yours, &c.,

BEAVEN RAKE.

Mr. Samuel Stevens has just received a letter from Mr. A. R. Wallace, dated "Ternate, December 7th," in which he writes as follows:—"I returned to Ternate a few days after the last mail had left here, having had a most hazardous voyage from Ceram and Waigiou. My collections are immense, but very poor, when it is considered that they are the result of nine months' collecting by two persons in East and North Ceram, Mysol, and Waigiou. Ceram is a wretched country; and the Papuan Islands, now that the cream is taken off by Aru and Dorey, are really not worth visiting, except for the Birds of Paradise.

"My beetles, I am sorry to say, are most miserable—smaller and more obscure species than at Dorey, and only a few of the good ones found there, and none in any quantity.

"In birds there is absolutely nothing good but the *Paradisaea rubra*, which is the only species that inhabits Waigiou, and is peculiar to that island.

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"I have been so busy with my mass of specimens (all wanting sorting and cleaning), and with my numerous letters and books (a whole year), that my mind has been too much unsettled to write. Next mail I shall write to all my entomological and ornithological friends who have been kind enough to send me communications.

✓ "I do not like the figure of *Semioptera wallacii* copied in 'The Ibis' from Gould's: the neck-shields are not shown to advantage; and the white plumes should be raised much higher or laid down lower—they are neither one thing nor the other.

310 "C. Allen starts in a week or two for N. Guinea—to the true locality for the rarer Birds of Paradise, and I trust he may be successful. The last voyage, with all its dangers and disappointments, has nearly sickened me, and I think in *one year* I shall return.

"I seem to have all your letters but one (April 16, 1860)."

The following extracts are from letters recently received by us from Mr. Edward Blyth:—

"Calcutta, January 4th.

"I have just received 'The Ibis,' vol. ii. No. 8, and need I say that I am delighted with it? My compliments especially to the Hon. T. L. Powys and to Mr. W. H. Simpson. I have also something like a compliment to send you on the part of my little *Sháma* (*Kittacincla macroura*), whose cage hangs about eight paces from where I am now writing, and thoroughly enjoying existence at the delicious temperature of 70° Fahrenheit. Turning to p. 410, opposite to which is a figure of *Circaëtus zonurus*, and holding it up to look at it, little *Sháma* immediately became in a violent condition of excitement. No doubt at all about it, as I have proved a second and a third time. There is something about that spirited figure of *Circaëtus zonurus* which *Sháma* less approves of than I do. We have all heard of the old Greek painter who deceived the birds. Here is a modern instance; and, I cannot help thinking, a sufficiently remarkable one. Alexander von Humboldt, in his 'Personal Narrative,' if I remember rightly, relates that a small South-American monkey at once recognized the insects it had been accustomed to prey upon, though represented only in outline

or uncoloured. Contrast that with the non-appreciation of a picture by Arabs or certain other races of human kind !

“ Well, in your No. 8, p. 323, I demolished a luckless Monsieur Payen, who cheerfully fancied that he had made a grand discovery about the comestible birds’-nests. Now it comes to the turn of my good and exceedingly respected friend, Robert F. Tomes, Esq., who tells us (p. 318) that, as far as he knows, ‘ the name of Professor Macgillivray stands alone in justification of the alleged Fringilline affinities’ of the so-called Bearded Titmouse. ✓

“ Now, it does so happen that the very first ornithological essay I ever committed to writing in my life was about this very bird, which I called ‘ Bearded Reedling,’ and not Tit, or Titmouse. This was in 1832, in the first number of Rennie’s ‘ Field-Naturalist’s Magazine,’ wherein I made my *début* as a scribbler in Natural-History matters. I have had much to answer for since then ! But, however that may be, it seems that I do not happen to have this particular number handy to refer to at this instant ; nevertheless I recommend those who possess the opportunity to revert to it, because they will find some sound and direct personal observations on the habits of the ‘ *Bearded Reedling*,’ whose affinities I at that time thought were *Shrikish*. By the way, this species is ‘ the Least Butcher-bird’ of Goldsmith’s ‘ Animated Nature,’ in which I suppose that the agreeable author of ‘ The Traveller’ and the ‘ Deserted Village’ copied Buffon as usual.

“ However, in that same ‘ Field-Naturalist’s Magazine’ for April 1833, p. 190 *et seq.*, in returning to the charge, I would not listen to anything about affinity with *Parus*, and I think that it may be discerned that even then my notions were already approximating *Finch*-ward.

“ In 1838 I took a part in a new translation of Cuvier’s ‘ Règne Animal,’ wherein, if you refer to p. 198, you will find that I assert of the Reedlings (*Panurus* seu *Calamophilus*) that ‘ their anatomy is strictly that of a Finch ; and they are much more nearly related to the Waxbill-Finches than to the Tits, with which latter they have little in common. The gullet has an extremely long dilatation, or craw, and the gizzard is remark-

ably muscular.' In the same work (p. 180) I remarked of the *Falcunculi*, that 'they are nearly Tits, with a somewhat Shrike-like bill, and resemble our common *Pari* in their manners, notes, nidification, eggs, and plumage.' Others have since come over to the same opinion.

"In my Catalogue of the specimens of Stuffed Birds in the Asiatic Society's Museum, Calcutta (1852), I placed *Panurus* at the tail of the *Fringillidæ* (p. 134), under the heading of '*Incertæ sedis*.'

"Permit me further to inform you that our late most sincerely lamented friend William Yarrell was about to perpetrate, through his artist, a most thoroughly detestable figure of *Panurus biarmicus*, carefully and minutely copied from a villainously stuffed specimen, when I happened to call upon him just in the very nick of time, and gave him an off-hand sketch of about the genuine outline, which appears (in his third edition) in vol. i. p. 406: only the tail is not quite long enough, nor the tarsi; and that shadow of a shade of the moustache is, of course, a mistake, such as non-naturalist artists are so extremely prone to indulge in.

"Of course you know that the late Prince Bonaparte described a second race of the *Panurus* genus from Kamtschatka, in one of his papers in the '*Comptes Rendus*'—about such a form as our friend Charles Darwin would designate an 'incipient' species.

✓ "I observe in p. 353 that Mr. Powys remarks of the Gadwall Duck, that it is 'by far the best for the table of the European *Anatidæ*.' I have digested several Gadwalls this season, and I don't think that he is very far from wrong; but the best of all the Duck tribe, so far as my experience goes, is decidedly *Fuligula rufina*. Much, of course, depends upon the cookery: too often, as the poet tells us, 'cooks come from t'other place!' But a fine fleshy Red-crested Pochard, just done to a turn, and not overdone, must be equal to the finest 'Canvas-back' that ever was roasted. To say the least, I cannot conceive the possibility of anything of the sort being finer! I undoubtedly am a bit of an epicure in a quiet way, and have just been feasting off Glossy Ibis. Take my word for it, a roasted *Falcinellus igneus* is anything but contemptible fare.

"Some time ago, I met a stranger who had been travelling in the Middle Island of New Zealand (I wonder if he will ever read this). Of course I was curious about the *Apteryx owenii*; and I showed him Gould's figure of the bird, and tried to make him comprehend some notion of its value. 'Good,' said he, 'I know it well: we ate four of them in one pie!' Alas for *Apteryx owenii*, as well as for the last surviving specimens of *Dinornis* or *Palapteryx* (if such there yet remain), to be put into a pie! 'Gather your roses while you may,' Mr. Editor, and collect your impennates before this pestilent civilization spoils and ruins everything!"

"Calcutta, January 19.

"In my small garden near the entrance of my residence is a tolerably umbrageous tree, the branches of which are convenient for hanging up dendrophytic orchids, ferns, &c. Now, from the foliage of this tree I have several times lately heard a remarkably sweet, low, continuous warbling note, and could not imagine what bird it came from—supposing it, however, to be some delicate little Becfin. This morning I was determined to settle the question; so I brought out my spy-glass, and, lo! what should the songster prove to be but *Lanius superciliosus* (Indian variety, *phænicurus*), which I had only known heretofore as an exceedingly harsh chatterer? I have much pleasure therefore in noting this redeeming point about this bird; and it is not the only one: for, harsh as his ordinary chattering may be, either that chatter, or the brisk and smart apparition of the pretty little sprightly Pied Wagtail (*Motacilla luzoniensis*)—one or the other—is annually, to us here who note and observe, the earliest familiar token of the most welcome approach of what we designate by comparison the 'cold' season. Moreover, I have never observed this *Lanius* to be murderous; and, as regards other birds, I doubt if it ever is so."

"January 22.

"Babú Rajendra Mallika has just got another fine batch of things, including seven Victoria Crown-Pigeons (*Goura victoriae*), a superb male *Microglossus* to match with his female (the ♂ is considerably larger than the ♀), and one of those beautiful Ground-Pigeons (*Caloenas cruenta vel luzonica*).

"I was about to take a short trip to Burmah; but as our friend J—— is appointed to a station on the Sitang River, in Tenasserim, I start in a steamer in the course of a couple of days or so, and mean to accompany him at least as far as Maulmein."

The subjoined extract from the "Argus" of October 25th, 1860, gives the most recent account of the progress of the experiment of the introduction of English Singing-birds into Australia, which has recently been undertaken at Melbourne. It will be observed that the little immigrants have adopted the Australian seasons, and begun to nest in October! :—

"The English birds at the Botanic Gardens are now all in a bustle. They seem perfectly awake to the character of the season. The little Warblers are busy in nest-building, and performing all the other tender offices which mark their proceedings at spring time. The Larks are already multiplying, and the Thrushes have nests both in the aviary and in the open air. The Starlings and Blackbirds which were brought out by the 'Lincolnshire' and the 'Essex' occupy a building in the Botanic Gardens' reserve, which is usually devoted, in the winter, to the accommodation of the Alpacas and other quadrupeds. Here they will remain until their plumage—lost or disordered on the voyage—is restored, when they will be removed to the aviary, and thence to the open air. A similar house holds a number of Thrushes that are nest-building in the orange and Japanese spindle-trees which are placed there. In the aviary the same interesting process is going on. There the Goldfinch, the Linnet, and the Java Sparrow have nests, as well as the Thrush and the Quail—due care, however, being taken for the separation of the peaceable from the pugnacious birds. The Pheasants are engaged in egg-laying, and for the work of incubation the assistance of some Bantam fowls has been secured. The whole of the arrangements for the preservation of the birds which have been sent from England, and the propagation here of the feathered tribes of the old country—thanks to the indefatigable Dr. Mueller—are as complete as can be desired."